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FBI FOR THE DIRECTOR FROM AMBASSADOR TAUBMAN
EUR/FO AND EUR/NCE

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TAGS: PGOV PREL RO

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR FBI DIRECTOR MUELLER'S VISIT TO
BUCHAREST

Classified By: AMBASSADOR NICHOLAS TAUBMAN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (S) I welcome your upcoming visit to Bucharest November 13-14. I want to share some thoughts about the extraordinarily strong bilateral partnership we have with the Romanians, the political backdrop to your visit, and how your trip can help advance USG interests here. Romania is a reliable ally on many fronts in the Global War on Terrorism (including in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Western Balkans), and in our close and fruitful foreign policy, intelligence and law enforcement relationship. Your visit is an excellent opportunity to convey to President Basescu and other senior leaders that their efforts and Romania's sacrifices have not gone unnoticed at the highest levels in Washington.

¶2. (S) We are working increasingly closely with the Romanians on a wide range of issues. Romania's can-do pro-American, pro-NATO tone is set from the top, under President Basescu's strong leadership. Even as Romania enters the EU in January, he has emphasized a continued strong strategic partnership with us and maintaining an outward-looking Euro-Atlantic foreign policy. Nearly two years after his upset election victory, he remains the dominant political figure in Romania, with approval ratings regularly topping 60 percent. Yet Basescu is only part of the equation, as he is primus inter pares in a badly frayed coalition with Prime Minister Calin-Popescu Tariceanu. Whether by conviction or expediency, Tariceanu has tended to define his political stance in opposition to his rival Basescu, as evidenced by his surprise June announcement supporting withdrawal of Romanian forces from Iraq. Your schedule includes meetings with both of these dueling palaces--Cotroceni and Victoria Palace--in an effort to bridge the gap and to ensure that our strategic partnership is broad-based, rather than centered around a single personality or faction.

¶3. (S) Romania is in a period of rapid transition, as evidenced by its pending entry into the EU next January. There are many issues associated with these EU accession, including the phase-out of USG funding for regional SEED programs in Romania, the closure of our USAID mission, and the end of many bilateral assistance projects designed to foster the rule of law in Romania. An important "legacy" institution that we want to keep as a platform for future cooperation in law enforcement is SECI, which is headquartered in Bucharest. SECI is under some pressure from the EU, which tends to view it as a made-in-USA organization. Some in the EU also want to see greater future focus on exclusively-EU organizations such as EURPOL. You can make a big impact by stressing with your Romanian interlocutors the importance we attach to SECI. SECI is complementary to EU-only

organizations, since it is a trans-national body whose membership is drawn largely from outside the European Union. It helps create new patterns of multilateral cooperation in a region better known for porous borders, weak rule of law, and spillover from internal conflicts.

¶4. (S) Unfortunately, Romania has also become synonymous with "phishing," ATM and credit card theft, auction fraud, and other forms of cyber-crime. Again, this is an issue with transnational implications given that many of the victims are U.S. citizens and companies. Your visit provides an opportunity to stress the importance we place on cooperative efforts to deal with this problem. As with many Balkan countries, corruption is still endemic in Romania. You should encourage those in the government--such as Justice Minister Macovei--who are trying to do something about the corruption issue. DOJ/FBI assistance, especially to the technical service of the Anti-Corruption Prosecutors' Office (DNA) has been invaluable. The Romanians have embraced the U.S. "task force" model with some success. There is continuing concern about the influence of organized crime in Romania, including money laundering and use of front companies to gain a foothold in areas such as gambling and petrochemicals.

¶5. (S) Finally, this visit is an opportunity to hear out the Romanian point of view. Basescu is a big-picture thinker and a shrewd strategist. Romanians pride themselves on being among our closest partners and collaborators, but feel that they have important insights to bring to the relationship. The Romanian world view reflects its location on the strategic crossroads of Southeastern Europe, facing east across the Black Sea towards Russia, Turkey and the greater Middle East. Romanians were among the first to underscore the growing importance of the Black Sea region, both as a region of potential instability and as a vital energy

corridor. They have historically viewed Moscow with suspicion, and are deeply concerned about growing Russian energy leverage in Europe. Similarly, Romania feels that it has a special affinity and understanding for the countries of the Middle East, where it has relationships that date back--for better or for worse--to the Ceausescu period. You will hear a readiness to work hand-in-glove with us in the Western Balkans including on Kosovo and Serbia, but the Romanian analysis of the situation on the ground is not always in lockstep with ours.

Taubman